

A NOTE FROM THE HEALTH OFFICER

This week we celebrate National Public Health Week, an annual week to recognize the importance of public health. I would like to thank all the public health professionals doing the hard work to keep our communities safe amidst the most challenging public health crisis of our lifetimes. We are all in this together and every individual's decision to stay the course with mitigations efforts and get vaccinated will help end the pandemic for everyone.



Thank you to community members who got tested so that we could get a better understanding of community and school rates this week after a surge prior to and during spring break. With a large TCAPS hosted testing event, testing of athletes and other community testing, this helped to hone in on district and school level trends. With the 4-day pause of virtual learning, an estimated 500+ 14-day quarantine of school age children was avoided. Additionally, it provided the necessary time for the health department to complete case investigations and work with the schools on contact tracing.

- Wendy Hirschenberger, Health Officer, Grand Traverse County Health Department

Health department, School Leaders Discuss Localized Decision-Making

Today, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and MDHHS announced recommendations for additional precautionary measures in response to increasing rates of COVID-19 infections. These recommendations include pausing youth sports and in-person instruction for high school students as well as refraining from indoor gatherings due to the increase in rates in COVID-19 infections in these groups.

In keeping with the strong relationships between local health departments and school leadership in northern Michigan, the Grand Traverse County Health Department met with school superintendents in the county to review local data from the week. The health department supports individual school districts in their decisions whether to continue virtual learning or return to in-person learning, including high school sports, based on current available data pertaining to that school district or individual schools.

School and local health officials discussed not only the state recommendations, but also the strong track record that our districts have in maintaining in-person instruction throughout the school year as well as individual school data pertaining to student COVID-19 rates. Affirmation of the 4-day pause Also, important to consider is the current expanded eligibility and availability of the COVID-19 vaccination.

Rather than continuing with a county-wide pause to in-person education, the health department will support individual school systems to make decisions regarding whether in-person vs. remote education is best and safest for their students and community based on our recent school data and their COVID-19 response plans. Northern Michigan schools have successfully and safely maintained important opportunities for students to learn in person throughout this school year for the majority of the school year. Enhanced mitigation measures were also recommended to prevent outbreaks and a large number of quarantines.

These decisions are considered very carefully by examining local case numbers – including both community cases and cases within their school population as well as quarantine and isolation-related student absences - and the other pandemic risk indicators such as public health and hospital capacity.

VACCINATIONS

1. Fill out scheduling survey once



2. Receive scheduling email & set your appointment



3. Show up for your appointment



ANYONE 16 AND OLDER is now available to get a COVID-19 vaccine. Get in the queue and 'Save Your Spot' today! To get in the queue, visit: <https://gtcountycovid19.com/vaccine/> to fill out the scheduling survey.

With more and more providers in our area offering the COVID-19 vaccine, we understand that some that have previously signed up at <https://gtcountycovid19.com/vaccine/>, may have received a vaccine elsewhere. If you were previously signed up, you now have the option to **'Remove Your Spot'**. This will help the GTCHD during planning, so we may only send email invites for appointments to those that need one.

Remove Spot

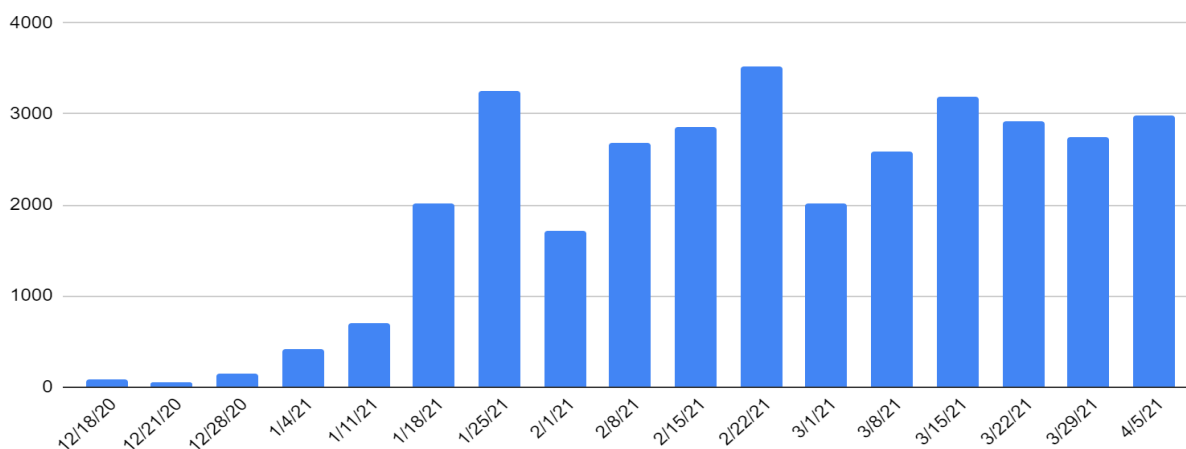
Save Your Spot

The Pfizer vaccine has demonstrated 91.3% efficacy 6 months after vaccination day. AND it has demonstrated efficacy against the B.1.351 (first identified in South Africa) variant. MDHHS reports that the variant B.1.1.7 (first identified in Britain) also has little to no impact on vaccine acquired immunity. This is a bright spot in the face of our rising case counts.

VACCINATION NUMBERS IN GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY

Overall Grand Traverse County continues to do very well overall with vaccination of everyone eligible (anyone 16+). Our current total cumulative coverage is 51% for initial dose and 37% for completed doses. Vaccination coverage rates for GT County residents by age group based off the MDHHS COVID 19 Vaccination Coverage Dashboard.

GTCHD Total Doses Administered By Week



Administration Age Group	Initiation Cumulative Coverage	Residents Vaccinated	Population	Completion Cumulative Coverage	Residents Vaccinated	Population
16-19 years	13.3%	560	4198	3.3%	140	4198
20-29 years	24.7%	2,650	10733	14.7%	1,581	10733
30-39 years	39.5%	4,641	11748	23.7%	2,781	11748
40-49 years	44.1%	4,770	10809	26.8%	2,895	10809
50-64 years	58.0%	11,539	19889	34.2%	6,803	19889
65-74 years	83.9%	9,804	11686	75.0%	8,763	11686
75+ years	89.6%	6,844	7640	82.4%	6,299	7640

COVID Vaccine Coverage by Age Group



*percentages include all providers, including Munson, local pharmacies and providers

DOSES ADMINISTERED AT GTCHD VACCINE CLINICS AS OF 4/09/21: 33,462 Total

DOSE	WEEK OF 4/5-4/9	CUMULATIVE (through 4/09/21)
Initiated	989	18,429
Completed	1985	15,033

To find the latest statistics regarding COVID-19 vaccinations across the state, you can visit the MDHHS vaccine [dashboard](#).

CURRENT NUMBERS AND TRENDS

Even with vaccinations being administered at a rapid rate in Grand Traverse County, cases continue to rise in the county and region. As of April 9, the 7-day average of new cases was up to 54 per day, which continues to increase weekly. In line with the metric, the 7-day average for percent positivity has also risen from 3.6% to 15.8.8%. Both increases reflect a similar pattern to what Grand Traverse County experienced during the second wave of the pandemic in November of 2020. To see direct data, [visit our dashboard](#).

Some local trends of note currently are:

- The 0-39 age group accounts for 60% of all cases
- 91% of the cases in the last month have been in those less than 50 years of age; this shift reflects the success of vaccination in the 50+ groups; Less than 3% of the cases were in the 70+ age group
- 33% in April are linked to travel or social gatherings
- 93% of the cases were symptomatic; Cases have often reported mild symptoms and continuing to work, socialize or go to school before getting tested.
- **If you have cold-like, allergy-like or sinus-like symptoms, please get tested.**
- Variants have been detected in Grand Traverse County and the Traverse City region at an increasing rate.
- Due to increasing cases and a growing number of variant cases in Michigan effective April 5th, 2021 the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services has reinstated a standard 14-day quarantine for all close contacts of COVID-19 cases.

CASE NUMBERS AND STATISTICS

CASES SINCE 4/2/21	DEATHS SINCE 4/2/21	CUMULATIVE CASES as of 4/9/21	PERCENT POSITIVITY (7-DAY AVERAGE)	CASES PER MILLION (7-DAY AVERAGE)	COUNTY RISK LEVEL
391 ↑	3 ↑	5294	15.8% ↑	316 ↑	E

*arrows reflect an increase or decrease from the previous report

Additional statistics are available on the [MI Safe Start Map](#) and on the Health Department's [dashboard](#) and [Facebook page](#), which updates new case information daily at 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

It is now even more important that EVERYONE continue to do what works to slow the spread of the virus by wearing their masks properly, socially distancing, avoiding crowds, washing their hands often and making a plan to get the safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine you can. We all have a personal responsibility to slow the spread of COVID-19 and end this pandemic.

TESTING AT CHERRY CAPITAL AIRPORT

Voluntary, free, rapid (antigen) COVID-19 testing is now available at Cherry Capital Airport for incoming travelers. Testing group will require proof of passenger travel on the day of testing (boarding pass or itinerary schedule).

There is an approximate 30 minute timeline from registration to result. The registration and collection process takes 15 minutes, with results being emailed/texted to patients approximately 15 minutes after sample collection.

Below is their initial schedule, subject to change as flights activities shift heading into summer:

Sunday – 3:00pm to 11:00pm

Wednesday – 2:00pm to 10:00pm

Friday – 12:00pm to 8:00pm

GTCHD TESTING AT CHERRYLAND MALL

Rapid antigen testing is now available at the Grand Traverse County Health Department's Cherryland Center testing site. Testing is free of charge and will be completed regardless of symptoms. Testing is Mondays and Tuesdays by appointment only. To book an appointment, follow this [link](#).

Due to the rising number of cases in the county, **the Grand Traverse County Health Department is asking anyone who is told that they tested positive for COVID-19 to self-isolate at home until the health department is able to reach you. Additionally, any and all household contacts or close contacts should quarantine until the case investigation and contact tracing occurs.**



COVID-19 TESTING IN GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY:

Grand Traverse County testing sites include:

[Munson Healthcare Foster Family Community Health Center](#) (priority 1 & 2 only)

[Northwest Michigan Health Services](#) (testing all by appointment)

[Rite Aid at Chums Corner](#) (testing all by appointment)

[Walgreens at Chums Corner](#) (testing all by appointment)

[GTCHD Testing at Cherryland Mall](#) (testing by appointment on Mondays and Tuesdays)

See [Michigan's COVID-19 test finder](#) for more options

Testing sites have capacity and tests are available. Individuals seeking tests can call:

- Their healthcare provider
- The Munson Healthcare Covid-19 hotline: 231-935-0951
- The Michigan COVID-19 hotline: 888-535-6136

COVID-19 VARIANTS

- Viruses change through mutation, and new variants of a virus are expected to occur over time.
- The virus that causes COVID-19 (called SARS-CoV-2) is known to acquire, on average, one new mutation every two weeks.
- A number of mutations have been identified, however, the variant first identified in the United Kingdom (U.K.), called B.1.1.7, is the first “Variant of Concern” for COVID-19 identified in Michigan. This variant was identified in Grand Traverse County in March.
- B.1.351, first identified in South Africa, has also been identified in Michigan.
- P.1 was first identified in Michigan on March 31, 2021.
- The MDHHS Bureau of Laboratories (BOL) conducts surveillance to quickly identify any variants of interest, including B.1.1.7, B.1.351, and P.1.
- B.1.1.7 is believed to be more contagious, but there has been no indication it affects clinical outcomes or disease severity compared to the SARS-CoV-2 that has been circulating across the U.S. for months.
 - However, a higher rate of transmission would increase the number of people who need clinical care for COVID-19 with the new variant circulating in Michigan.
 - At this time, little-to-no impact is expected for natural immunity, testing, or vaccination.
- B.1.351, the second variant of concern, has been identified in Michigan.
 - The B.1.351 variant was first identified in South Africa.
 - Less is known about the B.1.351 variant at this time, but it emerged independent of the B.1.1.7 variant.
 - This variant may also have a higher rate of transmission which would increase the number of people who need clinical care for COVID-19.
 - Currently there is no evidence to suggest that this variant has any impact on disease severity.
- Additional variants are expected to be identified. Visit the CDC's New COVID-19 Variants web page for additional information.
- When a variant of concern is identified, state and local health departments will take action to protect public health.
- Contact tracing is prioritized for people who have had contact with variant case(s).

STAY SAFE TO STAY OPEN

Residents, businesses, and visitors are encouraged to ***Stay Safe to Stay Open***. This includes the following measures while in public:

- ★ Staying 6 feet apart from others
- ★ Wearing masks while indoors or even outside when you are unable to maintain social distancing
- ★ Limiting large social gatherings - not hosting or attending large gatherings
- ★ Continuing basic prevention measures like frequent hand washing
- ★ Following workplace safety protocols
- ★ Daily monitoring of yourself for symptoms including your temperature (even if you feel fine)
- ★ Staying home if symptomatic - even if it is just very mild symptoms
- ★ If others in your household have tested positive or are symptomatic, stay away and take extra precautions to not become infected.

ABOUT THE JOC

Grand Traverse County's Joint Operations Center has been meeting to coordinate efforts and communication on the COVID-19 pandemic since Friday, March 13. Members include key community partners from health, government, first responders, education, social service, and business sectors.

###

Media Contact: Emmy Schumacher, eschumacher@gtcountymi.gov, 231-493-8376